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A second firm hired by Trump campaign found no evidence of election fraud

The founder of the company has been interviewed by federal prosecutors investigating the former president's efforts to overturn the 2020 results

By Josh Dawsey

April 27, 2023 at 2:58 p.m. EDT

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Former president Donald Trump commissioned two firms to study his allegations of voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election. Neither found any evidence to support the claims. (Aristide Economopoulos for The Washington Post)

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Former president Trump's campaign quietly commissioned a second firm to study election fraud claims in the weeks after the 2020 election, and the founder of the firm was recently questioned by the Justice Department about his work disproving the claims.

Ken Block, founder of the firm Simpatico Software Systems, studied more than a dozen voter fraud theories and allegations for Trump's campaign in late 2020 and found they were "all false," he said in an interview with The Washington Post.

"No substantive voter fraud was uncovered in my investigations looking for it, nor was I able to confirm any of the outside claims of voter fraud that I was asked to look at," he said. "Every fraud claim I was asked to investigate was false."

Block said he recently received a subpoena from special counsel Jack Smith's office and met with federal prosecutors in Washington, but he declined to discuss his interactions with them. Block said he contemporaneously sent his findings disputing fraud claims in writing to the Trump campaign in late 2020.

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"I just don't believe it's appropriate at this point in time to discuss anything related to the grand jury process," he said.

Prosecutors have obtained extensive information about Block's efforts, according to people with knowledge of the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe an ongoing investigation.

Federal records show the Trump 2020 campaign paid Block's firm more than $750,000 in six payments. The first, for $390,000, came three days after the election, records show, and the final payment came around Thanksgiving of that year. The payments were labeled "Recount."

Separately, prosecutors have interviewed multiple employees from the Berkeley Research Group in recent weeks, another Trump-paid firm that produced a 29-page report ultimately undermining many of Trump's fraud claims, according to three people familiar with the matter. Berkeley's study contradicted claims made by Trump and his advisers that there were extensive numbers of dead voters and cases of fraud in states such as Georgia and Nevada.

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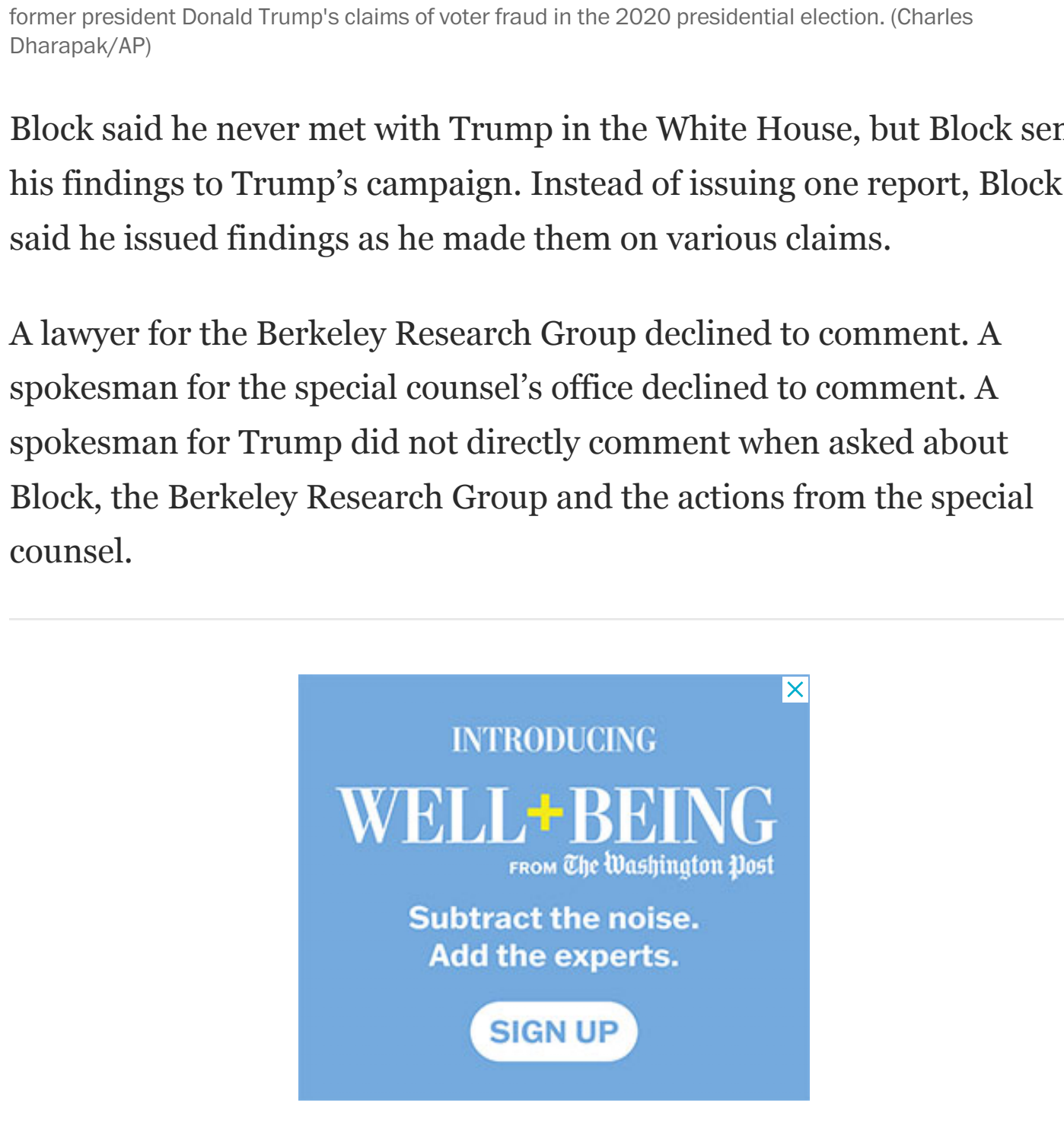
The prosecutors have obtained records from the firm and its employees through subpoenas, two people who worked on the Berkeley project said. They have learned that the firm's work was given to a number of top Trump aides, and that Trump was briefed on the research himself by Berkeley employees, people familiar with the project said.

Firm employees have told the Justice Department that former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and other top administration and campaign officials were aware of the Berkeley research and findings, the people said.



Special counsel Jack Smith subpoenaed Simpatico Software Systems founder Ken Block about his probe of former president Donald Trump's claims of voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election. (Charles Dharapak/AP)

Block said he never met with Trump in the White House, but Block sent his findings to Trump's campaign. Instead of issuing one report, Block said he issued findings as he made them on various claims.

A lawyer for the Berkeley Research Group declined to comment. A spokesman for the special counsel's office declined to comment. A spokesman for Trump did not directly comment when asked about Block, the Berkeley Research Group and the actions from the special counsel.

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"This is nothing more than a targeted, politically motivated witch hunt against President Trump concocted to try and prevent the American people from returning him to the White House," spokesman Steven Cheung said. "Just like all the other fake hoaxes thrown at President Trump, this corrupt effort will also fail."

The existence of a second study — and Block's findings — have not been previously reported, nor have his interactions with the Justice Department or the interactions between Berkeley Research Group and the Justice Department. The Washington Post has previously reported on the findings of the Berkeley Research Group.

Prosecutors are trying to show that Trump and his advisers definitively knew — or had good reason to believe — that their myriad fraud claims were false as they continued to spread and raise funds off the claims. The claims ultimately convinced some voters that the election was stolen and inspired rioters to storm the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. The falsehoods also brought in more than $250 million to Trump and his allies.

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Key to building such a case, experts say, is proving that Trump and other advisers making the claims publicly did not believe them or had evidence to know they were false.

The prosecutors have signaled extensive interest in experts who were paid with Trump's own money and whose research was disseminated to campaign advisers and Trump himself.

Block, 57, was previously unknown to many in Trump's political orbit. He formerly ran for governor in Rhode Island as a Republican and founded Simpatico Software Systems in 2001.

He said his firm has been used by other states and companies to look for fraud, and that he has acted as an expert witness in court cases involving fraud. Block said he was a computer engineer by training and had worked in technology for decades. He had also previously formed the Moderate Party in Rhode Island.

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Block said he was sitting on his porch in Rhode Island with his family the day after the election when a Trump adviser called one day. "Would I be willing to look for voter fraud?" he said, describing the request. At first, his family would not give him the "immediate green light," but he said he convinced them that it would be okay to work for Trump's campaign.

Soon, Block said, he was sent fraud claims by Trump's campaign to study. Some came from the campaign itself, but others originated from sources outside the campaign and informal advisers to Trump, which the campaign passed along.

The claims were all without evidence, he said, and some were more ridiculous than others. He declined to specify the claims, saying they were part of the ongoing Justice Department investigation. Block also declined to identify which outside advisers were responsible for some of the claims, saying that was also part of the investigation.

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Block said the $750,000 payment was partially because much of the research required "expensive data analytics." He declined to say which research methods he used, saying it was part of the investigation.

The other firm, Berkeley Research Group, was paid more than $600,000 through a subsidiary, records show.

Since the election, Block has tweeted extensively about how many of the election fraud claims were false.

"Attention election conspiracy theorists: Fox News just coughed up more than $750 million to settle the defamation lawsuit brought by Dominion Voting Systems. Yet another 2020 false fraud claim put to rest," he wrote last week.

Alice Crites, Isaac Stanley-Becker and Devlin Barrett contributed to this report.

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Josh Dawsey is a political enterprise and investigations reporter for The Washington Post. He joined the paper in 2017 and previously covered the White House. Before that, he covered the White House for Politico, and New York City Hall and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie for the Wall Street Journal. Twitter

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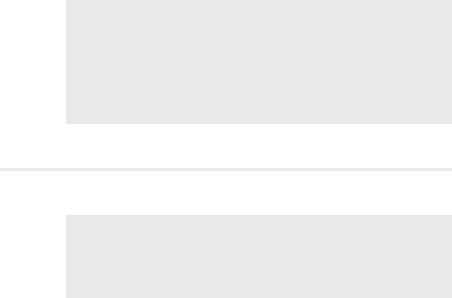

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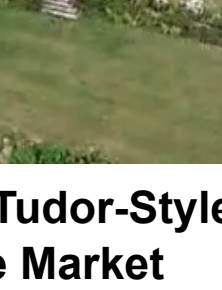

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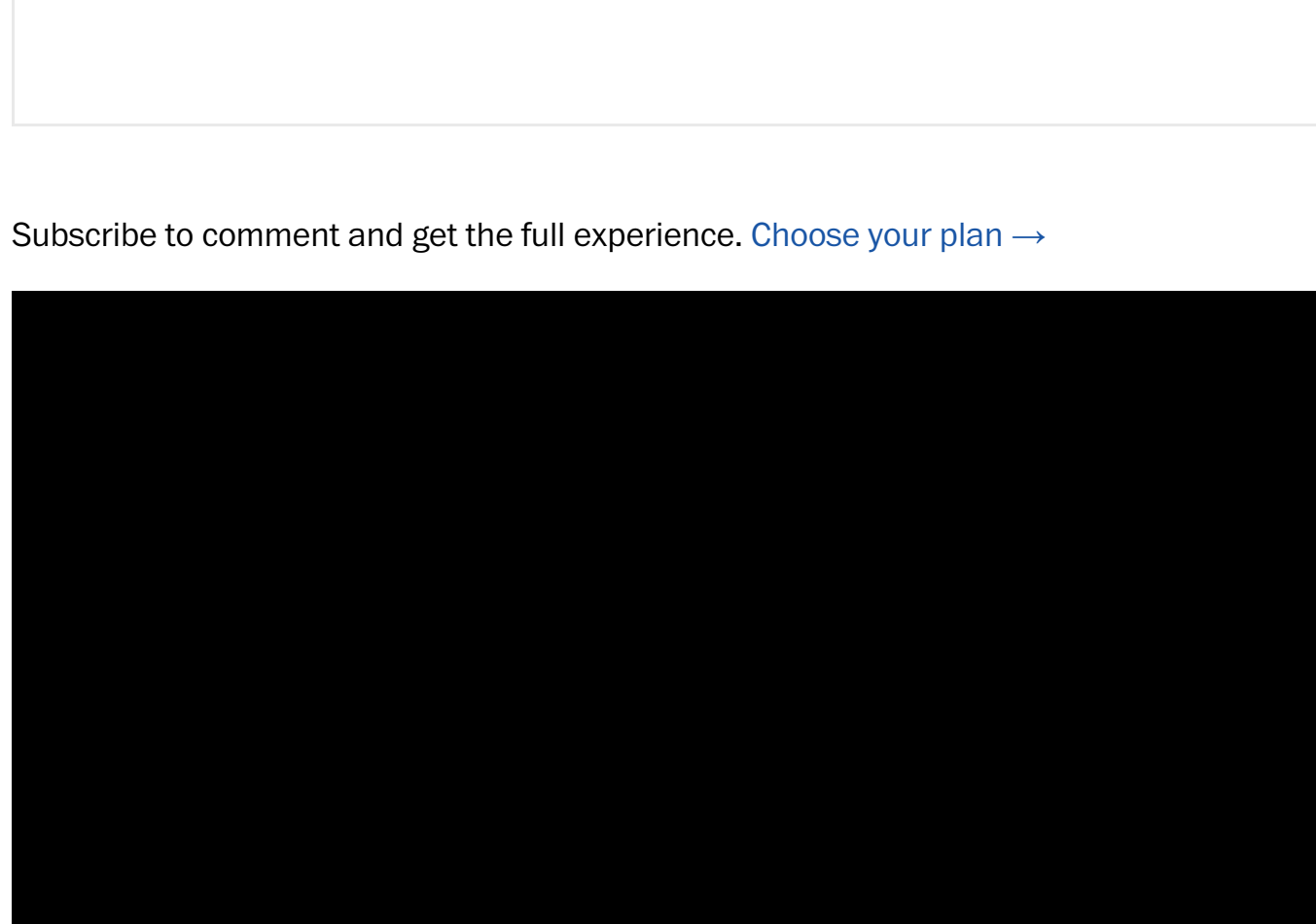

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